1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

## THE SETTING

361 Three miles to the north on the Hyderabad–Karimnagar road
312 there is another village, about as large as Shamirpet. It is called
678 Aliyabad. It has some rich and influential Muslim and Hindu agriculturists among its residents who share with those of Shamirpet the waters of the Shamirpet tank for irrigation purposes. This system is not very satisfactory and the two villages have numerous complaints against each other. There is a keen rivalry between the two, and every two or three years the tension and passions of the people rise to such an extent that there is danger of a breach of peace and of rioting. The residents of Shamirpet do not think much of the people of Aliyabad, and the latter heartily reciprocate their dislike.

671 People living in different villages have very few occasions on which to meet each other as a whole. There are no common ceremonies and functions in which several villages participate. To a certain extent caste ceremonies provide opportunities for inter-village meetings; but the most common meeting-places for people belonging to the nearby villages of the same area are the markets and fairs.

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17



796 there the procession starts in the direction of the Hanuman shrine outside the village. The Madiga drum-beaters are at the head of the procession. At some distance from them are the Deshmukh, the Brahmin and the other elders. These are followed by the other villagers. At the shrine the Brahmin worships the *shami* leaves
796 and the goddess Durga. When the worship is over people snatch
554 the leaves. Then follows the important social act of exchange of
578 these leaves and a friendly embrace. Between castes of equal social status and between persons of equal kinship and age status within the caste itself, the exchange is on a basis of equality. For example, A will take a few leaves from B; and B will take a few from A. The two will then lock each other in an embrace for a few seconds. On the other hand, people of high caste will give some leaves to those of the low and untouchable castes; and the latter will respond by bowing down to touch the feet of the former. In the case of the untouchables this is a symbolic gesture, for they touch the earth near the feet of their superiors and not the feet. Within the caste itself the nature of this exchange is determined by the age and kinship status of the persons concerned. As a general rule elders and persons with a recognized superior status give some leaves to the juniors; and the latter, in their turn, bend down to touch the feet of their elders. On this day people are expected to forget their quarrels of the last year, and to meet each other in a spirit of friendship. In fact, many petty differences are forgotten, and several people who were hitherto not on speaking terms resume normal friendly relations again.

796 *Deepavali.* Deepavali or the 'festival of lights' is one of the most important Hindu festivals and is observed throughout Hindu India. The celebrations extend to two days—the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the dark fortnight of the month of Ashvina. On the first of these two days, known as *Narka Chaturdashi* or *Bhogi*, Hindus get up very early and have their bath. Women in the higher castes, especially among Brahmins, Komtis and Reddis, take lighted lamps on a plate and, waving them before their husbands, perform the *arati* rite otherwise reserved for gods. This has to be completed before the break of dawn. Later in the day images of gods and deities in the house are worshipped and specially cooked dishes are offered to them. In the evening a large number of little earthen lamps are lighted and arranged in front of the house; in other parts of the house, too, one or more of these lamps

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17



606 work, and do it to the satisfaction of the hypercritical female
607 relations. If she wants to make an impression, she must relieve the mother-in-law and other elderly and important women in the house of a part of their work by undertaking to do it herself. A mother-in-law is bound to be pleased with her if she offers to massage her feet at night. 'Good mothers' often train their daughters to take recourse to these methods for making an initial good impression on the hard-to-please mother-in-law. However, in some cases a different pattern seems to be followed. Some mothers say to their daughters, 'The more submissive you are the more your mother-in-law will make you work hard. If by mistake you do her part of the work on one day, you will find that it will become a regular part of your duty from the next day. The best way is to avoid all work which is normally to be done by someone else.' This view too is not without some truth.

606 Gradually the enthusiasm for the bride cools off as she does not
607 remain 'new' for a very long time. She is expected to pass the rest
578 of her life in this house, and as such it is necessary for her to adapt herself to its ways. Her steps are watched; her contribution to the work of the household is critically evaluated, and comments are freely made to appraise her of the views of others regarding the quality and quantity of her work. The mother-in-law and the sisters-in-law keenly observe her talk and behaviour. Does she praise her parents and their home very much? If she does, the mother-in-law or one of the sisters-in-law will unearth some scandal about them. If she praises the fields belonging to her father, or even happens to mention the good food which she ate at home, her remarks would be noticed, and in return she would be taunted, either immediately, or at a suitable occasion later. Thus if she is tactless enough to say, 'I remember the rice in our house which had such a delicate flavour', in reply she would hear something like this: 'Yes, we know. In your parental house they served you platefuls of pearls and diamonds in place of rice; in this house you get only a handful of broken rice and paddy straw.' A casual remark from the daughter-in-law about her feeling tired, may be taken to mean that she is complaining about the hard work which she is made to do. The mother-in-law would retort, 'Yes, my flower, I know you are delicate. Why? In your parents' home you had dozens of servants and you did not have to move so much as a grain of rice, and here you work from dawn to midnight. They

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17



ought to have married you to a prince. Why did you come to a house as poor as this?' And so it goes on. The mother-in-law and her daughters, married or unmarried, form one clique. The daughters-in-law of necessity form another, but they are divided among themselves, and have rivalry, jealousy and suspicion for one another. The pattern of inter-personal relations emerging from it is very complicated. There is always considerable back-biting and telling of tales. Alliances are formed and broken periodically. A daughter-in-law working diligently to find some favour with the mother-in-law is envied by the other daughters-in-law, who never fail to find fault with her, and always manipulate things to place the blame for anything going wrong squarely on her. In a simple and casual utterance, very often, some hidden meaning is read: on the other hand, explosive remarks are couched in simple words and very innocently made. The intrigues and jealousies among the womenfolk in a joint family are the despair of men. 'If we listen even to a fraction of the goings-on in the family, we will lose our heads', say the men. Others add philosophically, 'God has made mothers-in-law to quarrel with the wives of their sons coming to their homes. We cannot help it. Men will not remain men if they cease quarrelling; we shall all become gods!'

This is indeed a very well-established social pattern. To a mother-in-law, none of the daughters-in-law is perfect, although she may have preference for one over and above the others. From the daughters-in-law's point of view, a mother-in-law would ever remain a mother-in-law: 'Good and bad scorpions, both have the sting; the difference is that the one uses it more often than the other.'

I have already pointed out that the wives of brothers living together occasionally unite against the mother-in-law, but they too have their mutual jealousies and disputes. Husband's sisters, when they are young, are often quite friendly towards their sisters-in-law, but as they grow up they 'get wings' and start indulging in back-biting against them.

The daughter-in-law must maintain sufficient distance from her husband's father and his elder brothers. Unless it is absolutely necessary they should not speak to one another, and when it cannot be helped they must communicate in the minimum of words. Familiarity or intimate talk between them is regarded as highly improper. On the other hand, with the husband's younger

still resident in the village. Tradition emphasizes the necessity of solidarity between brothers, even if they live separately. They should stand by and support one another in the hour of need. Indeed, there are considerable misunderstandings and consequent quarrels between families, but they do co-operate and support one another when serious situations arise and call for such assistance. Those who fail to rise to the occasion and do not behave in the expected way are criticized by the community and may even be admonished publicly by the village elders. However, regarding the general tone of inter-personal relations between brothers it may be said that it is not characterized by deep sentiments and affection. Understanding is desirable, but it is believed to be rather difficult to attain. However, ties of kinship inevitably bring them close to each other on ritual occasions and in moments of distress.

### OTHER RELATIVES WITHIN THE FAMILY

Brief mention may be made here of certain other categories of relatives who live together in the same house within the joint family.

Grandparents are believed to be indulgent. It is said that they 'always spoil the grandchildren'. It is remarkable that persons who have had a reputation for being very 'strict fathers' behave in an altogether different way with their grandchildren. They are lenient and friendly towards them, and indeed take a lot of interest in them. Amusing grandchildren and being in turn amused by them is one of the favourite pastimes of the grandparents. Most of the time they can be seen fondling them or carrying them about. When their parents are angry with them, young children often take shelter with their grandparents. Very few grandparents ever complain about the behaviour of the little ones, and they would rarely spank them.

An uncle must be treated like the father and an aunt like the mother. But in this relationship much depends on the age and personality of the uncle. If he is nearer in age to the children than to the father, he is regarded as a superior kind of elder brother, but if he is nearer to the father in respect of age, he is feared and respected by the children. Often the children develop their pattern of relationship with an uncle on the basis of his character and personality. 'Some uncles are friendly. They allow us considerable

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17



sible village elders. Few such breaches escape the attention of society, although in many of them no action may be called for by the caste or village elders. Display and ostentation are severely criticized in the community. Individuals inviting social censure for this fault are frequently nicknamed and mimicked. The behaviour of persons who have just come into wealth or a position of authority is subjected to a particularly critical scrutiny. Sexuality, in all its different aspects, provides another popular theme for gossip. Although bragging about unusual potency and sexual adventures is very common, in general the community watches and comments upon all abnormalities, particularly excessive indulgence and lack of adequate sex vigour. The comments of the group in this sphere too are merciless. Those who are on the higher rungs of the ladder of power hierarchy jealously watch their own position, and anyone casting a covetous eye on a position of influence at once becomes the target of the criticism of several pressure groups in the community. People attaining conspicuous success are invariably the subject of malicious criticism. Their actions and speech are closely watched, and later commented upon. Opportunities for taunting them are eagerly sought, and indirect references to their humble origin are frequently made. Finally, persons having too many novel and original ideas also invite the criticism of society. While people are unsparing in their comments, they are very much reserved in their praise.

Anger is freely expressed. Loud shouting, use of foul language, and occasional physical violence are the principal channels for the expression of aggressiveness. Sentiments of love and friendship too are publicly expressed; the only exception in this case being the suppression of all sentiments suggesting sexual intimacy.

Concepts of 'manliness' and 'defending the honour' play a significant part in governing inter-personal relations within the community. It is not manly to beat anyone who is too young, too aged, weak or infirm. On the contrary, a fight between equals is always considered fair; although it may necessitate action on the part of village elders. Notions of personal and family prestige differ in different castes, as well as at different income levels. Any challenge to personal prestige or family honour is bound to arouse a violent reaction.

Truth and straightforwardness are acclaimed as social ideals; but intelligent and ingenious ways of deception too receive

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17
Hindus
Muslims



and then ask him to do a thing, a Madiga will never refuse. Ask him to do something in soft words and he will have a thousand excuses ready.'

Although Shamirpet has maintained, even in the worst years of communal tension, a fairly honourable record of communal harmony and the relations between the Hindu and the Muslim sections of the village population have been cordial in every sense, the two communities have some generalized notions about the inherent qualities and attributes of each other. The Hindus will say, 'The untouchables are impure, but Muslims are poisonous. If you touch a Madiga you may have to sever only the finger with which you touched him, but if you touch a Muslim you will have to cut off the arm itself.' 'The Muslims are good only in two things —they eat and copulate like beasts. Who else except a Muslim would ever think of going to bed with his uncle's daughter, who is next only to his real sister.' The Muslims are regarded as showy and ostentatious. 'A Muslim will eat stale rice inside his house, but when coming out he will apply some clarified butter to his lips. Then he will belch loudly and say, "How much fried rice and meat have I eaten to-day".' With regard to conversion to Islam the Hindus often say, 'A Hindu untouchable of yesterday becomes a Muslim to-day; and to-morrow he will start proclaiming that his forefathers lived in Arabia!' The Muslims, having for generations prided themselves as the ruling race of Hyderabad, tend to look down upon the Hindus, and make fun of their numerous gods and superstitious beliefs. On the whole the Muslims regard the other community as 'cowardly and mean'. But the recent changes in the political fortunes of the State, resulting in the end of Muslim rule, have had a sobering effect on the Muslims, and now they do not take the offensive against their Hindu neighbours, as some of them very commonly did in the period preceding the Police Action of 1948.

I have pointed out earlier that most of these stereotypes find expression in jest and banter, and occasionally in outbursts of anger. While each caste seeks to proclaim and prove its own superiority in some respect it invariably holds some generalized notions, such as those described above, about the inherent qualities of the other castes. It is believed that there can be individual exceptions to the rule, but regarding the castes themselves these stereotypes are valid. However, very few of these notions influence

578 the general tone of life in the community. Inter-group tension between Hindus and Muslims, engendered partly by political controversies in the Hyderabad State, threatened disharmony and possible breach of peace in the village in the period preceding and following the intervention of the Government of India. The recognition of the *fait accompli* in the State by the Muslims and the change in their approach and attitude towards the Hindus soon 666 established cordial relations between the two communities. At 578 the time of our investigations the Brahmin/non-Brahmin controversy, which was governing the political alignments of people within the State to a considerable extent, had its echoes in Shamirpet also. In the Telangana area, in general, it was taking the shape of an open conflict of interest between Brahmins and Reddis. In Shamirpet the individual relations between the Brahmin household and the Reddi residents of the community were very cordial; but in the discussion of general political and social questions there was a persistent anti-Brahmin feeling. Casteism was a force of no mean significance in the first general elections under the Republican Constitution, and manifested itself in such slogans as 'Reddis must solidly stand together', 'Irrespective of party considerations Reddis must vote for a Reddi candidate', or 'Non-Brahmins must unite to strike a blow to Brahmin domination'. As the interaction between the different castes in the wider political field is still in its initial stages, the pattern of group alignments has not emerged 578 very clearly. A third factor may also be mentioned here. Under 564 the influence of the social and political propaganda of the Sched- 185 uled Caste Federation, the untouchable castes have started voicing their grievances and protests against their position in the caste hierarchy. So far these protests have been mild and verbal only. Perceiving the economic advantages of the traditional system, the untouchables have not yet seriously challenged the assumptions that underlie the structure of the community. However, the abolition of untouchability by law, the granting of equal shares to them in all public utility services, and protests against the traditional system by the more vocal and assertive untouchables have aroused some tension with regard to them in the higher castes. 'Times are changing. The untouchables were admitted to schools first, then they started travelling with us in the same railway trains and buses; and now they want to draw water from our wells and eat with us in public eating-houses. The

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17



government is indulging them; and for vote-getting the political parties are spoiling them. If things go on like this, in the future these low castes will want to marry our daughters and sisters,' remarked a Reddi agriculturist. Those standing nearby nodded their assent. The above remark is illustrative of the general attitude of 'responsible' persons in the higher castes.

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EDUCATED VERSUS UNEDUCATED

Adverse comments are frequently heard from the educated and uneducated people against each other. The uneducated especially have some stereotypes regarding the educated; and the latter often express derogatory opinions about the illiterate members of the community.

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Remarks echoing the following opinions and sentiments are commonly heard from the uneducated people: 'What use is education to us? After four years at the school all that our children learn is to hold a pen in their hands. What we really want them to learn is the holding of the plough firmly.' 'By learning to read a couple of books at the school the youngsters begin to think that they have in their skulls all the knowledge and learning in the world. They scoff at their parents, belittle the experience of the elders, and seem to think no end of themselves. Realities of life soon teach them a lesson. Sooner or later they repent and fall at the feet of the elders.' 'Everyone says, "Send your children to school; uneducated people are like animals; education makes them human beings." But what do we get out of education? Boys learn to read and write, but they forget the traditional ways. They do not want to cultivate the family land, and are ashamed of their traditional profession. They all want jobs in the city. If things go on like this what will be the future of the community?' 'The educated people excel each other in tall talk and boasting. They will drink, gamble and intrigue. There is nothing else that they can do.' 'What service do the educated people render to the community? They instigate simple illiterate people to quarrel, and later exploit the situation to their own advantage.' 'We village people are simple. Education makes us crooked.' In substance the average attitude boils down to this: education shakes a person's belief in the traditional ways and creates in turn new desires and ambitions; these factors operating simultaneously make the educated persons misfits in the community.

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On the other hand, the educated people think: 'The illiterate

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17



871 578 villagers are simple, superstitious and stupid. They believe anyone. Conditions in the village will never improve so long as they dominate the scene.' 'Without education a man is like a beast.' 'As you goad a bullock, you can goad an uneducated villager.' 'Why do petty government officers harass us so much? Only because we are illiterate.'

It may be pointed out here that so far the educated section consists only of people who have attended primary or secondary village schools for four to six years. The number of these people does not exceed eighty, and from among them also many have virtually relapsed into illiteracy. With the exception of some government officials who are not a permanent part of the village population, none has so far had the advantage of modern scientific education in one of the better schools of the city, although at the time of our investigations some half a dozen boys from the village were attending higher schools. It is interesting to note that persons having education in rural vernacular schools have the same fear, suspicion and general sentiments regarding those who have modern or 'English education', as the illiterate section of the population has about those who have a background of village [555] education. Notwithstanding the popular prejudice against education of both types, its economic advantages as well as prestige value are now generally recognized. With the gradual improvement in the standards and practices of the schools more parents are now anxious to enrol their children there. Fears still persist, however, and people urge that, besides imparting literacy, the school should also equip them better for earning their livelihood.

### URBAN VERSUS RURAL

369 578 The general pattern of comment regarding urban and urbanized people is the same as that of the comment of the uneducated about the educated. In the context of urbanization, or even in that of the adoption of some urban traits, supplementary opinions are often added. 'We villagers are simple-hearted; but the town people are crafty, calculating and self-centred.' 'When the relations from the city come to stay with us we receive them well, and give them the choicest share in everything. But when we happen to go to them they have difficulty even in recognizing us. And they treat us as if we were an unwelcome burden on them.' 'Never trust a town-dweller, for he never distinguishes between

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17



truth and untruth. He is sweet when he wants us to do something for him; and coarse when the work is over.' 'The ways of city people are strange. They will go to bed even with their cousins and aunts.' 'The villager who has lived in the city for some years learns all the ways of the townspeople. He may be an insignificant menial in the city, but when he returns to the village he behaves like a big lord.'

The people with urban contacts, on the other hand, regard the village-folk as rustic and crude; and consider themselves more forward and civilized. They have an unmistakable tendency to look down upon 'these simple and uncomprehending people', make fun of their ways and occasionally exploit them by exerting undue pressure. 'These people are timid and foolish. They are afraid of anyone who can make some show of authority, and yield very easily to the pressure of officials', said a village youth when he was asked to give his opinion about his fellow villagers, who had not had the benefit of contacts with city ways.

Those who have some urban contacts are gradually coming to the fore in village leadership. They are often criticized and commented upon, but nevertheless their opinions are valued and in general the community looks to them for guidance in all situations 'where it has to face the outside world'.

## 2. CHILDHOOD, YOUTH AND OLD AGE

This section is devoted to a brief study of the three most significant stages of life—childhood, youth and old age. While family, kin-group and caste are important units of social structure which influence the course of an individual's life-cycle, from the point of view of socialization and social control the significance of the village as a unit cannot be minimized. Apart from the family and the caste, people spend most of their time in their respective age-groups, and through this process of growing-up together, common play and participation in youth activity the people tend to have a common value—orientation and certain common basic attitudes towards life.

For the first two or three months of a child's life the mother remains almost in sole charge of it. A young mother is invariably instructed in the technique of mothercraft by an elderly female relative, but at this stage it is her responsibility to look after the

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17



476 571 given by friends and neighbours. The average and poor peasants extend this co-operation to the sphere of economic activities also, particularly during weeding and harvesting their families help each other in the speedy completion of the work. Among the occupational castes, families of a specific caste-group are expected to accommodate each other during time of illness, difficulty or temporary incapacity, by lending manual or monetary assistance to them for continuing their vocational craft. Fairs and ceremonies organized by the village reveal the co-operative spirit in the community. On some such occasions, one faction or other may refuse co-operation—sometimes it may even cause obstructions and create difficulties, but on the whole it can be said that organizers have the enthusiastic support of the bulk of the community and dissidents tend to lose the sympathy of wavering camp followers. In inter-village quarrels as well as on all such occasions that demand vindicating the honour of the village, the residents of the settlement often act with spirited unison. Behind most forms of voluntary co-operation there are no social sanctions; but the general attitude of society regards them as desirable and necessary. In the words of an informant, 'Who can say that he will not require help from anyone at any time? Money can buy many things. Power too can get many things done. But there are several situations in which neither money nor power helps. When you require sympathy and help your neighbours come forward.' To quote another informant, 'To-day you are well; to-morrow you may be very seriously ill and it may not be possible for you to get a doctor. What saves your life? A cheap herbal concoction suggested by your neighbour! One can never know how and when one is going to need the help of another.' Finally to quote a third informant, 'To-day I need your help; to-morrow you may want it from me. Why do we live in a village? Why do we not live in the wilderness? Only because we cannot do without human sympathy and occasional help.' Rendering help at the time of need is of value in itself. It partially relieves the distress of the person receiving help; and gives a psychological satisfaction to the person giving it, who incidentally also gains some social prestige through it.

578 But I do not want this picture of co-operation to be too idyllic, for conflicts and tensions in the community are also numerous. The analysis of the quality of inter-personal relations in the community,

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17



earlier in this chapter, suggests that an extrovert and sensitive people who cannot conceal their approval or disapproval and who do not suppress their immediate reactions cannot have a very peaceful and quiet life. Indeed most of the tensions are short-lived, but quarrels and conflicts are numerous and frequent. As the community is partially autonomous in several spheres of life, it is necessary for it to have an effective mechanism for the control of these conflicts.

Shamirpet, however, is only partially autonomous, for it is a part of a wider social system. The extent of caste organization is regional, and covers a very large number of villages. In several spheres of life it is the caste rather than the village that has the upper hand in controlling the behaviour of its constituents. Details of ritual connected with the life-cycle, and observance of the *mores* and norms of the caste fall in this category. Further the village is but a small unit in the national political structure of a sub-continent. Its laws are made by the State Legislature and the Union Parliament; and the law-enforcing arm of the State extends to it as effectively as it does to the rest of the country. This brings the State police and magistracy on the scene. All important breaches of law go to the civil and criminal courts. What remains of the autonomy of the village appears quite insignificant, but in actual practice relatively few cases go to caste councils, fewer to courts of law, and left to itself to control the inter-group and inter-personal relations of its members the machinery responsible for social control and justice within the village finds itself burdened with considerable work.

How is this mechanism set in motion? How does it work? Presently I shall give a few illustrative cases which will reveal the process in certain typical situations. At this stage it is necessary to point out that all cases of conflict do not go to the village council. In many cases the parties to the dispute boisterously quarrel over the issue and there the matter ends. For a few days they probably will not be on speaking terms, leave each other out of social functions and ceremonies, and continue to indulge in mutual recriminations and behind-the-back slander; but in course of time normal relations will be resumed. In other cases mediation or arbitration of the elders may be sought or may be volunteered by the elders themselves. When influential village elders notice disorderly or unbecoming behaviour on the part of someone

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17



578 repeatedly they intervene, and seek to set things right by the
627 pressure of their personality. They ridicule, admonish and threaten the wrongdoer, and leave it at that. This intervention is often effective and succeeds in achieving the desired result. Disputes may be specially referred to influential and impartial elders, and thus a settlement is sought without the necessity of having to appear
692 before the village council. When these efforts fail, or when the
674 seriousness of the offence or dispute warrants it, it is taken to the headman or to one of the elders with a specific request that it be decided by the village council. On the other hand, elders may take cognizance of a serious matter and may themselves bring it to the notice of the village council. Of course all cases of murder, serious theft, and grievous bodily injury, as well as of default in payment of substantial loans are taken to the criminal and civil courts. Abduction and adultery can be referred to law courts; but generally they are taken either to the village council or to the caste council. Misconduct with a married or unmarried woman, running away with a married woman, default in fulfilling the terms and conditions of a marriage contract may similarly be referred to either or both the caste council and the village council. Of the two, whichever happens to be more powerful and effective attracts most of these marginal cases to itself. Personal disputes, minor property and land disputes, sex offences and conflicts arising out of breach of contract generally come up for hearing and decision before the village council.

695 The composition of the village council has been described earlier.[1] When cases come up for hearing before it, the proceedings are carried on with considerable dignity. Available evidence and eye-witnesses are examined. The motive for the offence, and the situation in which it was committed—particularly its immediate cause, as well as presence or absence of provocation—are also taken into account. Outwardly an attitude of objectivity and impartiality is maintained by everyone; although in reality the rival factions within the council try to tip the scale their own way so that the evidence may later be construed in such a way that it may prove advantageous to the client to whom they have already promised their support. At the time of actual decision the parties to the dispute have to withdraw, allowing the council freedom to discuss and analyse the issues involved. Divergent and often contrary opinions may be expressed by the rival factions at this stage.



1 [cf. at 116, pp. 45-6, --ANALYST]

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17



But when the decision is announced, it is done so in a manner that indicates unanimity among the members. Besides attempting arbitration and mediation, the village council also administers punishment when a person's guilt is proved. The nature of punishment itself differs in different categories of cases, also on the basis of persons involved in the dispute. It ranges from a simple warning to a complete social boycott; the intermediate stages being stern admonition, firm demand for apology, compensation to the aggrieved, and fining.

Absence of internal unity within the council has undermined its authority considerably. The fact that some of its members allow and encourage their protégés to defy—fully or partially—its decisions, contributes further to its growing weakness. Dissatisfied with its judgement one can always take the case to a regular court of law where the decision of the council may be reversed.

With these preliminary observations we can now proceed to examine a few illustrative cases which represent typical situations met with in the life of the community:

(1) V. R. R. and his brother B. live together. Their parents are dead, and being minor B. lives with his elder brother. V. R. R. has had elementary education. Being married into a respectable lower middle-class family in the city, and himself with some experience of urban life, V. R. R. regards himself as the leader of a band of city-influenced youth. As most of his time is spent in loafing, planning mischief, gambling, drinking and instigating people to quarrel, he cannot devote much time to the land, and consequently the financial position of the family is not satisfactory. V. R. R. adds to his income by extorting money from the villagers by offering his advice, help and support— often for unjust causes— but this money is spent almost wholly on himself. B. is now an adolescent, and is fast approaching a marriageable age. Noticing his elder brother's indifference towards him, B. approached some of the elders of his caste. His main complaints were: (*a*) V. R. R. does not spend his (B.'s) share of the land and its produce on him. (*b*) Nothing is being saved for his marriage. One day V. R. R. lost his temper over some trifling issue and scolded his younger brother. B. ran to E. D. R.—an influential man in the village, and the hereditary leader of his caste. Fearing that B. might be beaten by his elder brother, E. D. R. accompanied him to his house and asked V. R. R. to come out of the house and listen to

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17



him. Partly because of anger, and partly under the intoxication of his power and influence as the leader of a youth gang, he curtly remarked to E. D. R., 'Have you nothing else to do? What brings you here? Is it because of jealousy that you cannot see our welfare and prosperity and you are instigating my brother to separate from me?' This was too much even for the sedate, cool and level-headed E. D. R., who enjoys great reputation in the village for his sobriety. He lost his temper and said, 'You bastard, you seem to have developed great notions about yourself. After spending a few months in the city—and with the support of that band of rascals—you think that you can defy the authority of village elders. I shall show you what it means to be impertinent to me.' V. R. R. was still defiant, but less impolite. E. D. R. said, 'If you have the cheek to answer me back I shall make life impossible for you in the village. You have a long tongue, but if you wag it against us we shall pull it.' At this stage V. P. R.—a rival of E. D. R., who had also been approached by B. on an earlier occasion—entered the scene. But now he was on the side of E. D. R. and joined him in scolding the unrepentant V. R. R. Within a short time a small crowd gathered at the spot. Some other elders persuaded V. R. R. to apologize to the elders whom he had offended. This he did rather reluctantly. E. D. R., V. P. R. and the other elders assembled there decided that V. R. R. should give more attention to his agriculture, save at least two hundred rupees every year for the expenses of his younger brother's wedding; and after his marriage at the end of three years give him his share of land and cattle. V. R. R. agreed to do this and the crowd dispersed.

(2) E. R. is a middle-aged woman, and is counted among the colourful personalities of the village. In her day she was regarded as a local beauty and was known for a degree of laxity in morals. Now she has a sort of romantic attachment with C. M.—a local Muslim small-trader. Her husband is meek and docile; and her children ignore this affair. This particular case refers to her quarrel with her son Y., who not only abused her but added to the gravity of the offence by striking her in public. Outwardly the quarrel appeared to be an ordinary, everyday affair; but careful investigation revealed to us that the roots of the trouble lay somewhere else. The fact of the matter was that E. R. had got her son Y. married to a rather young and immature girl who happened to be her friend's daughter. Y. at this time was a grown-

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17



up man; but his child bride was unable to take her place as his wife for some three years more. To keep her son away from eloping with a young woman, E. R. not only tolerated but encouraged—some people say she actually brought it about—Y.'s liaison with a woman of the same caste living in the neighbourhood. For three or four years everything went on well and the relations between the mother and child were most cordial. Trouble started when Y.'s wife came to live with them. E. R. had expected that her son's amours with the other woman would end shortly. In this she was wrong. The young wife failed to win the affection of her husband, who remained deeply attached to his former mistress. E. R. could not tolerate this. She tried different methods to dissuade her son, and with every failure her relations with him were more embittered. Quarrels between them became frequent. Tired of the incessant flow of criticism and bitter remarks from her, one day Y. struck her—with fists first and later with a stick. He also perhaps pulled her hair. All this happened so suddenly, and E. R.'s husband was at the time so overcome that he found himself helpless and could not intervene in the matter. Infuriated by this E. R. ran into the street and started wailing and cursing loudly. Very soon this attracted a large crowd. Her husband tried to pacify her, but E. R. would not let him come near her. She said to him, 'You claim to be a man! Do you? You could see your son beating me in your very presence and did not lift even your little finger. For me you are dead. Go, go away—for me you are dead. Did you hear that?' Saying this she started breaking her glass bangles. This was quite serious for a Hindu woman breaks her bangles only when she is widowed. The crowd tried to pacify her. Sympathizers made efforts to find out what the matter was. For over an hour E. R. continued cursing her son and husband, spitting 'at their name' and throwing dust, signifying their burial. Then she gave a detailed and rather exaggerated account of the happenings of that evening. Three elders who were present at the spot immediately summoned the son and asked him to touch the feet of his mother and apologize to her. This he did readily, although with a sullen face. But E. R. reacted with another spurt of abuse and foul language. After a while people took them home. The gravity of the matter demanded its consideration by the full village council. Once again the son had to apologize to the mother, and in addition had to pay a small fine for his unbecoming behaviour.

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17



578 627 (3) This case is illustrative of some of the internal goings on in the village, and of some of the typical reactions manifested by the people.

K. was an average peasant. He had a son who lived separately in the village on account of his bad relations with his father. K.'s landholdings were modest in size, but some of his fields were quite first class. He was getting old and could not cultivate all the land by himself. Some of his relations came forward to help him, but he rejected their help. At this stage B. N.—an untouchable but influential cultivator—was ingratiating himself with K., and claimed to be his friend and well-wisher. It is said that B. N. persuaded a very influential figure in the village to lend him his helping hand in the pursuit of something which he had in mind. (It is rumoured that the influential figure agreed to lend his support in consideration of a substantial monetary gift.) After a few days it was known that K. had sold his best fields to B. N. Although the documents showed that B. N. had paid a reasonable price, it was generally believed that the amount which had actually changed hands was very small. K. had not consulted any of his relations about this deal. As if to add insult to injury, the old man had chosen an untouchable for this favour in utter disregard to the claims of his kinsfolk, and after the deal K.'s relations with them broke down completely. He went out to another village to visit some other relations, fell seriously ill and returned to Shamirpet in a very precarious condition. Everyone realized that it was his end, but his relations did not do anything for him. B. N. arranged for him to stay in a room of the village rest-house, and arranged with a shopkeeper and a young man of clean caste for the supply of rations and for the cooking of his meals. In a few days K. died.

His relations did not show any inclination to touch his corpse. When the headman sent word to them, they said 'We are not his relations. Did he ever remember us during his lifetime so that we may remember him now? He has his untouchable son who will inherit his property. Let him perform the last rites for him.' Hearing this, B. N. said, 'I am an untouchable. I cannot perform the rites. But I shall pay for them, and see that they are done in some style.' He sent for a band from the city, advanced money for necessary preparations, and with the support of the headman secured the co-operation of four clean caste unmarried youths to carry the bier. The relations took it as a challenge. They

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17



changed their attitude. One of their spokesmen said, 'The deceased was our seed; and not an untouchable. We may not have riches, but we shall perform his last rites.' They sent for another band, and the last rites were performed in a memorable style. K.'s son felt offended and kept himself away from the ceremonies.

(4) Robust and sturdy C. R. has several remarkable traits. Because of his personality and a rather impressive way of speaking he has considerable influence over his community and is looked upon as its leader. He is an untouchable. Some of his acts now and then disgrace his family, and bring about a temporary eclipse of his reputation. Several times he was accused of petty thefts, and once or twice fined by the village council. But when he stole a blanket and some brassware from his employer, and ran away with the wife of a neighbour, the matter was viewed very seriously. People from the village had seen him at a nearby railway station with all the three stolen things—blanket, brassware and the neighbour's wife. The theft was reported to the village council; and after some preliminary consideration the local caste group referred the elopement also to it. In the meantime news was received that C. R. was working in a sugar factory, but was anxious to return to the village. The village council came to the decision that C. R. should compensate his employer to the full value of the articles stolen, return the woman to her husband with a certain sum of money by way of compensation, and pay a fine to the council for the two offences. C. R. returned to the village, accepted the verdict of the council, but asked for a reduction in the amount of the fine. This request was granted.

(5) R. was a widow, and after the death of her husband had returned to Shamirpet to live with her mother. She was still young. In a few days she became the mistress of M. who belonged to her caste. They never lived openly as man and wife, but their relationship was well known. M. bought several expensive presents for her, and these included a silver necklace and bracelets. After about three years R. fell in love with an outsider who agreed to take her as his wife. M. did not object to this arrangement, but he insisted on having his presents back. R. was not prepared to part with them. One day when she was passing along the street in front of M.'s house, he ran towards her and started snatching the ornaments by force. R. shouted for help and people rushing to the spot separated them. The matter was reported to the headman,

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17



691 who convened the full council. Opinion in this case was divided, but the final verdict was that since M. had enjoyed sexual favour from the woman for three years he had no right to demand the return of the ornaments. R. married her new lover and went away to live in his village. M. was greatly dissatisfied with the decision, but there was nothing that he could do about it.

(6) D. worked in Bombay and when he returned to the village brought back with him his savings—estimated at four hundred rupees or so. He spent the money lavishly on drink and gambling. In less than a year he had squandered all his savings. Now he started ill-treating his wife. One day when the wife's father had come to take her home for a short stay, he asked her for eight annas to buy some drinks. She said that she had no money, and he beat her mercilessly. The noise attracted people to their house, and the woman's father reported the matter to the headman. The headman called some other members of the village council, and then summoned the husband and wife. He asked the wife, 'Why did you not give him the money?' The wife said, 'I did not have any with me.' She repeatedly asserted that she had no money. Thereupon her belongings were searched. This revealed that she had seven rupees. She tried to convince the council that this was her personal savings from her own earnings from the making of country cigarettes. But the Deshmukh said, 'Why did you lie before the *panchayat*? Why did you say that you had no money?' Encouraged by this turn of events in his favour the husband accused her of stealing three hundred rupees and asked her to leave him. She went away with her father to his village.

691 578 (7) L. and P. both belong to the caste of potters. Their houses stand facing each other. A tamarind tree standing midway between the two houses is a bone of contention, and over this tree there were several pitched quarrels between their families. Who has the right to its fruit? Who should sweep up the dried leaves when they fall? Who should enclose the tree within his own enclosure? Mediation of elders did not succeed in finding a satisfactory solution to the problem. The matter was reported to the village council; but there too no decision could be reached as both sides had their own supporters in nearly equal strength. Efforts at bringing about a compromise were mostly fruitless, or else agreements between the rivals were short-lived. The village council considered it time and again, but in the meantime the matter was

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17



reported to a government officer. For four years the matter lingered on, and the tree continued to disturb the peace of that particular living-quarter. Ultimately, at the suggestion of the government officer, the decision was given that the tree should be cut down; its wood be sold and the proceeds distributed equally between the two parties. To effect this a time-limit of a month was prescribed, after which the council was to have the liberty to dispose of the tree and thus to deprive the disputants of the proceeds.

(8) I. and S. are brothers. After their father's death they continued to live together and cultivate their land jointly for two years. Then they had some family difficulties, and had to seek the mediation of village elders. Three influential persons acceptable to both the brothers worked out the details of partition. The family land was divided into two equal parts, but one of these parts was inferior to the other. Equal division of good and inferior land between the two would have meant fragmentation of some of the tiny fields with loss to both; and so it was decided that the one who accepted the inferior land would get all the plough cattle, and the one who got the superior land would have no share in the cattle left by the father. Both the brothers were to contribute two hundred rupees each for three years for the wedding of their sister. I. chose the superior land and S. agreed to have the inferior land with the cattle. For a time the arrangement worked well. The land was still in the name of I. in the government records, because he was the elder of the two. At the time of the partition there was a tacit understanding that they would contribute equally towards the payment of land revenue. But S. had a feeling that his share should be less on account of the fact that his land was inferior. He was instigated by some people to pursue the matter further. I. would perhaps have agreed to an amicable settlement had his brother approached him; but he was annoyed to notice that he sought outside help and unjustly maligned him. Intervention of the elders failed to bring about a compromise. The village council could not come to a decision quickly, as both brothers had powerful factions supporting them. Ultimately its verdict was against S., but his advisers suggested that rather than yield to this decision he should take the matter to a civil court. At the time of our investigations the issue was still undecided and no settlement was in sight.

These examples could easily be multiplied. Failure in implementing the terms of an agreement or contract, inability to pay

## LIVING TOGETHER

691 off small debts, serious sexual intrigues, domestic quarrels assuming serious proportions, etc., keep on coming before the village council again and again. It is very rarely that it has to take the final step of ordering the social boycott of an individual. Caste *panchayats*, on the other hand, take recourse to this weapon very often when breaches of caste convention are brought to their 688 notice. Eating with a lower caste, sex intrigue outside the caste, failure in observing injunctions attached to the status of ritual impurity, and inability to perform any major ritual are all punished by ostracism. This involves denial of social equality to the ostracized family. No one will share food or drink with it. No member of such a family will be invited to attend a socio-religious ceremony, nor will anyone accept his invitation. Its status of social equality will be restored when it performs the necessary rituals for the expiation of its offence.

578 Our investigations did not reveal the existence of any serious inter-group tensions and conflicts in the community. Just before and after the Police Action there was some Hindu-Muslim tension: in the first phase Muslims terrorized the Hindus; in the second the Hindus looted property from one Muslim house and terrorized the other Muslims generally and their ringleaders particularly. Between different castes or living-quarters of the village, within living memory, there were only two major disputes. Their details are not remembered, but it is claimed that the tension was short-lived and cordiality was established very soon between the warring sections.

578 The corporate unity of the village finds its fullest expression 621 when the inhabitants come into conflict with outsiders. The village of Aliyabad shares with Shamirpet the water from the 609 tank for the purposes of irrigation. The ratio of water supplied to Shamirpet and Aliyabad has been fixed at 5:2. Over this there are always some difficulties. One night the floodgates were opened, and the water that should have irrigated Shamirpet fields was diverted to Aliyabad fields. Next morning an organized team from Shamirpet attacked Aliyabad. There were three different theories regarding what had happened the previous night. Aliyabad people said that the guards of the floodgates had asked them to take the water under the impression that it was their turn. The guards said that being threatened with violence they allowed the Aliyabad men to divert the water to their area.

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

## LIVING TOGETHER

Perhaps the fact of the matter was that Aliyabad men had obtained the favour by bribing the guards; but their excessive greed in not allowing any water into Shamirpet fields had exposed their game. Prompt official intervention checked ugly developments; and later the issue was resolved at inter-village level. But in the dispute itself the two villages had forgotten their internal differences and dissensions and each of them had acted as one body. Another instance of such concerted action and village unity is provided by the conflict between the residents of Shamirpet and eight army men from the nearby cantonment. These eight people came to the village in two army trucks and started loading their vehicles with firewood cut and stored by a resident of the village. Obviously the army men intended to take it away without payment. The owner of the house tried to check them, and in the process he was badly beaten up. In the meantime the news had reached the other village people, who came rushing to the spot armed with sticks. They did what they thought proper at the time to avenge the honour of the village. Outnumbered by the villagers, the army men returned to their camp, threatening to bring their company to destroy the entire village. Police intervened and the trouble was not allowed to develop further.

In a society resting on rigid division of the population into castes separated by strict rules governing touching, eating and drinking, sex relations and matrimony, and social distance prescribed by tradition it is essential that people realize certain limitations and accept certain conditions. Caste consciousness develops quite early in one's life and these limitations and conditions are absorbed long before maturity by all through conversation groups, playgroups and general social experience. So far there has been no attack on the general premises on which the society rests, and therefore no serious inter-group or inter-caste conflicts have arisen. The lower castes have accepted their inferior status, and while they have made efforts to improve their lot they have not openly revolted against it. In their turn the higher castes have also shown considerable adaptability, and recognizing the general social trend they have readjusted their attitudes and curbed some of the earlier excesses and injustices. They may still object to being touched by a low caste man, but they will not protest against his wearing superior clothing befitting only the upper castes.

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17



well as the village cults still continue to retain their former position.

The Police Action undertaken by the Indian Union in 1948 changed the fortune and status of the State of Hyderabad. The most significant outcome was that political power changed hands —from an extremist communal party to the people of the State. It had a profound effect on the rural areas. However, sufficient time must elapse before we can evaluate its total influence on the life of the community. But it has set in motion certain trends which are not without interest to the student of social change in peasant communities.

The first definite change is that Muslims who occupied a privileged position during the former régime now no longer do so. On account of some of their un-neighbourly acts of terrorism during the last phase of extremist Muslim rule in the State some of them had become very unpopular. Fearing retaliation by the Hindus they ran away from the village temporarily. Now they have all returned. For some time they were jeered at and ridiculed, but at the time of our study cordiality had returned to the Hindu and Muslim sections of the population.

The second noticeable change is that under the administrative reforms initiated by the new administration forced labour and forced extraction of hospitality by government officials have been prohibited. In practice they still continue on a restricted scale. Government's decision to take determined steps against bribery and corruption has been announced; but firm action still remains to be taken in this direction.

Thirdly, the abolition of feudal estates has been a big step in the direction of land reform. With the end of the Jagirdari system Shamirpet has once again come under normal district administration. Further reforms ensuring a more equitable distribution of land, fixing a maximum limit on land holding and ending the evils of absentee landlordism are under contemplation. When these plans materialize substantial changes can be expected.

Fourthly, the government has intensified its welfare and nation-building activities. The village is to have a better school in the near future. The Public Health Department is already more active. The Agriculture and Veterinary departments are making a better planned and organized effort towards the introduction



of more scientific methods in their respective fields. But the results of these efforts can be judged only after a few years.

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Telugu AW17



state of weight not inferior to that of many a sovereign member of UNO. 631
But large parts of it were still under practically feudal *jagirs*, and the tension [578]
between a Muslim aristocracy and bureaucracy, and the Maratha/Telugu peasantry, was a fundamental weakness. As the only notable survivor of the Muslim Mogul succession-states, it was an Islamic cultural and political outlier fatally isolated from the Islamic bases in the NW and NE. These things were obvious to the casual traveller: as one passes from the lava mesas of Maharashtra the cultural landscape changes as much as the physical. At Gulbarga, on the lava edge, the tombs of the Muslim Bahmani Sultans dominate the gently rolling country, their domes rising like giant bubbles over the flat skyline; on the station platforms the local petty bourgeoisie and bureaucracy, gathered to meet the train and always easily recognisable, no longer wore the dhoti or completely anglicised office clothes, but were clad in the long tight-fitting Muslim *sherwani* coat. But the Muslim hold was thin, and they were a minority of 12·8%. Geographically the weakness of the state was of course its separation from the sea—doubtless not accidental on the EIC's part; hence its interest in Masulipatam on the Godavari delta, linked by rail and only 60 miles from Hyderabad territory by the easy gap where the Gondwana trough breaks the En Hills.

To-day it seems possible that all the Telugu country may be united into an Andhra state, despite the great gap in economic development, and perhaps in economic interests, between the harsh and arid plateau and the paddy-plain of the Madras littoral. It would probably be difficult enough to weld together peoples of such divergent environment; but the major objection to Andhra Desa is not so much the thing in itself as the difficulty of stopping such particularisms from spreading. The detachment of Telangana from Hyderabad leaves Marathwara to be disposed of; presumably there would be a move to attach it to a Maharashtra state. This would involve in turn the creation of Karnataka for the Kanarese, and there is an important overlapping zone between the two [29], while, as we have seen, the Bombay Karnatak has important ties with Bombay. That city itself is the [192]
natural outlet for Maharashtra and is in historically Maratha country; but commercially it is also closely allied with Gujarat, and indeed Gujarati is probably the main business language of Bombay. Clearly to such separatisms there is no end territorially; they probably raise as many problems as they solve; and from an *Indian* point of view the result of creating linguistically homogeneous states might be a grave weakening of national unity. (Cf. below, 682,692).

In any case, the development of the essentially poor land of Telangana 312
will call for great capital expenditure without, perhaps, much prospect of cash returns. The future depends largely on the progress of the great

[29] Deshpande, *op. cit.*, Fig. 20 (p. 86).

**Literacy:** Literacy test to the members of the Panchayats was never seriously taken by the Madras Government. Only the Vice-president and the President were found to be invariably literate except in a few instances, and even there, local importance and weight of authority served as the best springs of administrative efficiency rather than the test of literacy. 212 623

**The Election of the Panchayat President:** This sometimes led to village disturbances and party factions, but, the remedy did not appear to get him elected by the villagers as a whole, instead of by the Panchayat. 666 578

**Village Officials:** The idea of associating the village officers: the Karanams and the Munsif, as the ex-officio members of the Panchayat attracted the attention of the framers of the Madras Panchayat Bill of 1941, "in order that their experience and influence may be at the disposal of the Panchayat," but, this was strongly opposed by the reformers of the Local Self Government who felt that these village officers were no longer the natural leaders, but salaried officials of the Government and hence unfit to participate in matters of village administration entrusted to a purely honorary body. Another reason that was often adduced against them was that both of them might generally be leaders of two opposing parties and their entrance into the Panchayat would simply wreck its working. 624

**Executive of the Panchayat:** Under the amendment of the Madras Local Boards Act in 1943, the Government of Madras appointed executive officers to Panchayats. The executive authority had 1. to carry into effect all the resolutions of the Board, 2. to perform all the duties and to exercise all the powers specifically imposed or conferred on the executive authority by the Act; in fact, whenever it was expressly so provided for the sanction of the Board and subject to all other restrictions, limitations and conditions hereinafter imposed, 3. to exercise the executive power, for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of the Act and 4. to be directly responsible for the due fulfilment of the Act. ( Sec. 24-B of the amendment to the Madras Local Boards Act 1943 ). He was to carry out all the resolutions passed by the Panchayat, but this obligation was limited to legal resolutions alone. 642 647

The executive officer was the custodian of all Government Records though the President had free access to them. All the official correspondence addressed to the District Board, or the Provincial Government had to pass through the President. While

income of Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 30,000 per annum, the 2nd grade with an income from Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 20,000 and 3rd grade with an income of upto Rs. 10,000. Panchayats with Rs. 5,000 income were classified as minor Panchayats. The first 3 were called the major Panchayats and they had executive officer, while minor Panchayats had no executive officers. 623 662

**Grades of the Executive Officers:** The grade of the executive officer in the 1st grade Panchayats was from Rs. 80 to Rs. 100, of 2nd grade Panchayats from Rs. 60 to Rs. 80 and of 3rd grade Panchayats from Rs. 40 to Rs. 60. They were the servants of the Provincial Government working under the Local Boards. The Panchayats could not have any control over their executives. The executive officer was the chief executive of the Panchayat. He was to guide the Board in constitutional matters, put the resolutions before it for discussion and execute them according to its decision. He attended the meetings of the Panchayat, but was not allowed to vote. He was liable for transfer to any place in the Province. This meant a great hardship as the salary paid to him was too meagre to enable him to live in far off places from his native town. His pay, travelling allowance, dearness allowance and contributions to provident fund were all met by the Panchayat and the State Government paid nothing towards his maintenance. 647 [465] 625

**Executive Officer and the Staff:** The executive officer had under him a number of people like the sanitary inspector, the mistries, the supervisor for public works, vaccinators, compounders, midwives, bill collectors, not to speak of the clerical staff and menial staff like the scavengers, thotties, sweepers, lighters, peons, watchmen, etc. He was the appointing authority for staff beneath the clerical grade. The posts of the sanitary inspectors and overseers were advertised by him. They were to be appointed and paid by Panchayat with the approval and sanction of the District Health Officer and the District Engineer. But administratively they were subordinate to the executive officer and had to carry out the duties allotted to them by him. The sanitary inspector would have to look to matters of village sanitation, vaccination, administration of D. N. O. Licenses slaughter houses, clearance of sewage water, cleansing of gutters, cleansing of private and public latrines, etc. Similarly the overseer had to look to the execution of the public works all subject to the general supervision of the executive officer. 624 647

**Executive Officers and Panchayat Boards:** As a fact, the executive officers and the Panchayat Boards had a very strange relation. The executive officers were a much hated and an unhappy lot in the 647 623 578

647 623 578 Panchayat: while the Panchayat wanted to dominate them the executive officers placed themselves too high above the Panchayat and regarded themselves sometimes as fallen angels. There were several instances, where the Boards tried to harass the executive officers and the executive officers tried in return to take vengeance on them.

623 **Obligatory and Optional Functions of the Panchayats:** The administrative functions of the Panchayats were divided into two types: obligatory and optional. The obligatory functions included: public works, maintenance and construction of culverts, bridges and roads, burning and burial grounds, provision of water supply, parks, library and newspapers, lighting, public health and conservancy, slaughter houses, managements of fairs and festivals. While the optional functions were plantation of trees, provision of radio, arrangements with regard to infectious diseases, medical relief and donation, etc. Very often the funds of the Panchayats were spent to a large extent on salaries, office contingencies, dearness allowance, and travelling allowance, with little left over for discharging duties either obligatory or optional. (vide Table No. 20)

653 **Public Works**: The arrangements made by the village Panchayats for the construction and maintenance of roads, water tanks, sluices, channels and buildings constituted some of the important items of public works. In most of the villages in South India, provision of water supply and systematic arrangements with regard to maintenance of tanks and distribution of water to fields and settling of disputes arising out of it, were considered to be the functions of the village Panchayats. This was done by the contribution of communal labour according to which every resident of the community was to contribute his share to the maintenance of local public works. Employment of compulsory forced labour for execution of public works like tanks, canals, buildings and roads was a time-honoured custom in South India which continued even today.

Construction of roads and tanks was done by the employment of paid labour alone. But the Panchayats were not at liberty to undertake any work they liked. The Panchayats were generally authorised to undertake public works upto Rs. 250 without the necessity of the sanction of the higher authorities.

Some of the major Panchayats in the Circars and Nellore District had their own overseers and staff like the mistry on their establishment, paid them from their funds and got their works exe-

623 **Meetings and Attendance:** Above table brings out the nature of Panchayat meetings and its interest in administrative work. The Panchayat meetings form an index of their importance in administrative activities. Even in major Panchayats, the civic consciousness and sense of responsibility among the Panchayat members did not appear to be quite satisfactory. The attendance in most instances was hardly more than 50 per cent and in the majority, not even that much. Very often Panchayats had to carry on their transactions with a bare quorum. Instances where attendance was more than 60 per cent were rare. This was a poor index of their sense of local responsibility. To expect them in the face of these facts to become nurseries of democratic traditions and administrative experience appeared to be a very ambitious dream.

The Panchayat members should of course be given 3 clear day's notice, but, even when they got advance intimation, they rarely attended. There were instances of Panchayats in East Godavari and Anantpur Districts where meetings were not held for months and yet neither they were superseded nor any effective action was taken against them in spite of the provision of the Madras Local Boards Act.

If that was the state of affairs in the major Panchayats, the situation in minor Panchayats could not naturally be expected to be [578] better. There were usually party factions, village politics, group pressures, communal rivalries and these rent the village unity to a hundred shreds.

623 Superseded Panchayat Boards were also examined during
687 the course of the investigation. The reasons for superseding a Panchayat might be any one of the following: village factions, party politics, abstention from meetings, opposition to taxation, nepotism in appointments, misappropriation of public funds, harassing executive officers or other public servants, committing frauds, writing off the proper dues of Panchayats, allowing unauthorised exemption of taxtion, lower assessments and discriminatory policies towards favourites, leaving the taxes in large arrears without ever bothering to collect them, and several other unhappy practices by which, the running of administration of the Panchayat by the same body appeared to be pregnant with disaster. Such a Panchayat was superseded and a special officer was appointed to look after it for a period of one year.

Neither the grade of the Panchayat nor its previous record saved it from supersession, when it reached a stage of serious deterioration.

The supersession period was normally one year and sometimes one and a half years. Many of the irregular Panchayats were superseded more than once.

A few samples taken in the survey would illustrate the circumstances under which Panchayats were usually superseded. We shall review only a few cases as Tuni in East Godavari, Ganapavaram in West Godavari, Kantaram in Kistna, Kasimkot in Vizagapatam, Gooty, Dharmavaram and Gorantala in Anantapur, as instances of superseded Boards.

Tuni Panchayat in East Godavari was once superseded for its wanton neglect of taxation and collection of arrears in 1939.

| | Current Demand | Arrears |
|---|---|---|
| | Rs. | Rs. |
| License Fees | ... | 103—0—0 |
| House Tax | 3587—4—0 | 138—0—0 |
| Profession Tax | 226-14-0 | 75-12—0 |
| Public Scavenging Fees | 302—1-0 | ... |
| Markets | 38—4-0 | 3944-14—3 |
| Cart Stands | 1119-10-0 | 2224—5—0 |
| Slaughter House | 92—0-0 | 247—6—8 |
| Sale of Rubbish | ... | 76—0—0 |
| Total. | 5266—1-0 | 8809—5-11 |

No coercive steps were ever taken by the Panchayat to collect this money. On the other hand these dues were written off without the consent the District Board. The Panchayat had also executed works of gravelling 7 roads in undue haste. Sanitation was neglected awfully. As a result the Board was superseded.

One Panchayat in West Godavari proved to be a notorious example of village factions. When the previous President of the Panchayat died, another came in his place, but the party of the dead President began to oppose every resolution. When the new one was thrown out and a member of the opposition party was elected, they in turn repeated the same thing in vengeance, and consequently no work could be done. Roads which were said to have been executed were proved as never laid down. Some of the lands acquired in the name of the Panchayat were misappropriated. Inspite of all the instructions from the Inspector of Local Boards and the District Panchayat Officer, the Panchayat refused to carry out their orders. Influential majority of population of the village exerted much pressure to see that the

623 Panchayat would not work under any circumstances. Ultimately it
578 was superseded.
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In Kistna District there was a parallel instance. In one Panchayat three Presidents came in power in quick succession. When the President who was in office for 4 year resigned the Vice-President became the President. But he was thrown out and another was elected and during his term of office, the Panchayat was superseded. The cause of conflict was strong party factions. The difficulty was only one party in the village was returned into power while the other parties remained outside. So the members within the Panchayat tried to wreck it and ultimately the Board was superseded.

In Vizagapatam one Panchayat met on its own accord and began to cancel a resolution which it had passed permitting taxation on sugar pans, etc. Immediately when it was detected, the Board was superseded and a special officer was appointed, under whom the financial position had considerably improved.

Anantapur District had similar instances of Panchayats which were opposed to taxation, full of party factions, negligent in work and highly litigious. In one instance, the President of the Ex-Taluk Board was a member of the Panchayat and he was in the minority party. In the contest for the Presidential election for the Panchayat, the man from the majority party became successful. As the minority party wanted to pull down the party in power, they refused to pass the administration report, turned petromax lights to kerosene oil lights in the name of the public good and opposed vehemently any taxation The machine of the water pump system was spoiled. So the Inspector of Local Boards requested the Panchayat to add a surcharge of 12% to the house tax and provide themselves with this badly needed facility for which Government and District
687 Board gave donations. Yet the Board persisted in opposing for six
661 months postponing meetings for want of quorum, when it was finally superseded. Another minor Panchayat in Anantapur was superseded because the President and members under-assessed their houses and those of their relations.

These were instances of Panchayats getting annually an income of Rs. 200,000 where the engineer drew a much higher salary than the executive officer, but technically was a sub-ordinate to him.

623 The special officer who was put in charge was expected to bring about a uniform development in the administration of the Panchayat. He had powers to enforce fresh taxation, collect arrears and execute

by the Panchayat Board. This was intended to prevent nepotism and party politics in the matter of official appointments. But this change in the method of appointment alone would not attract better staff unless the existing poor salary scales of the Panchayat staff are revised for the better. 642 647

The Panchayat staff should also not be allowed to be stationary, but with a view to gaining experience, they should be transferred at least from one Panchayat to another in the same district, while the executive officer, supervisor, sanitary inspector, mistry could be made to move throughout the division which was equivalent to ⅓th area of Province as the present scales of pay do not allow them to move with comfort to longer distances. The creation of a Local Board Civil Service and recruitment of staff through the Public Service Commission by examination may prove better than leaving the appointments to the discretion of the executive officer because even he could be accused of partiality as the village Panchayats are always full of party politics. Panchayats expect the executive officer to join one side or the other and if he does not do that, make life impossible for him. His statutary position is such that he cannot stear clear of all such obligations and still be independent. While the Panchayats want them to be at their mercy, to appoint them and to dismiss them as they like; the executive officers prefer the total absence of any Panchayat control over them. They want to remain State servants, appointed, punished and dismissed only by the State. There was overwhelming evidence to support such a claim. There were instances where the executive officers had run away when they were dastardly attacked by the Panchayat members because their vested interests were touched. Another executive officer was threatened with death by a Panchayat member who raided his house at midnight, because of the higher rates he charged to his favourite hotel keeper. The executive officer in another Panchayat had to literally run away from the Panchayat Board to the Railway Station to save his life from the dangerous fury of the Panchayat members for having converted the house tax valuation from capital to rental basis. Another Panchayat sent wires to the Inspector of Local Boards and the Local Government Minister, stating that the Executive Officer had absconded with funds and a dead-lock was created in the working of the Panchayat, when he was only in a town and went there to see the District Collector. 623 [624] 578 ● 647

None of the Panchayats either major or minor were able to undertake all the obligatory and optional functions. 623

31: Slater S-5 (1916-1917) 1918 AWI India
Telugu AWI7



together on the northern and north-east sides of the village. On the northern side, but apart from the village, crowded together in irregular muddy streets of obnoxious smell are the houses of the washermen (70 houses) and the toddy-drawing class (150 in number). All are thatched with palmyra leaves. It is difficult to go into the midst of these huts because of the bad smell.

There are 271 houses in the caste village according to official information, actually 350; 125 in the paracheri.

The village is rather crowded and there is no space for gardens. There is much demand for building sites. There are extensions on the north and south sides into the fields. Some houses contain even two or three families crowded together. From Rs. 2 to 3 per square yard is paid for house-sites. Some of the cultivated land is distant 5½ miles from the home of the cultivator. A hereditary disposition to hate changes, as well as party feelings, and suspicions of inequalities, prevent the ryots from exchanging to get their land continuous. Field huts are used, but mostly for the working seasons only, and are not permanent.

*Subsidiary industries.*—At the time of the 1891 census there were 69 weavers; in 1901, 17; in 1911, 12; now there are only three. Foreign yarn of 10, 20 and 40 Nos. is purchased from fairs held at Nidadavolu, four miles off. The cloth woven is a very rough sort, used by the very poor classes; 75 per cent of the people prefer and use foreign goods. The implements are of the ordinary country type and of primitive nature. There is no co-operation among the weavers. They are unable to face the mill competition. As they find little demand for their goods, they are frequently forced to go away as agricultural labourers, and practise weaving only as a hobby for leisure hours. A weaver with five sons, as a rule, sends four of them to agricultural work and only one to his own industry. Till 10 years back 95 per cent of the population used to wear the village cloth. Now 75 per cent prefer and use foreign clothing. Two weaving families recently went to Rajahmundry as factory coolies. Ten years ago, many women of low castes used to practise handspinning. A little cotton was grown in the village up to 1912, but latterly it was sold for higher prices than the spinners could pay.

*Economic condition of the village—Rates of wages.*—Labourers are employed for the day or for the year. In the latter case Rs. 25 per annum is paid to boys and Rs. 50 per annum to men. For daily labourers the wage is three to four annas to men; 1½ to 2 annas to women; 1 to 1¼ annas to children; this may be paid in grain or money, or half in money and half in grain. The only perquisites are at harvest time. Thus for each crop, the yearly labourer receives 8 or 12 seers; on the whole 1 bag nearly. In festivals, they are given only meals and nothing more.

| *Current prices*— | | RS. | A. | P. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Paddy per bag of 166 lb. | | 5 | 8 | 0 |
| Cholam | " | 9 | 1 | 6 |
| Gingelly | " | 12 | 8 | 0 |
| Red gram | " | 8 | 6 | 0 |
| Kambu | " | 9 | 6 | 0 |
| Soap nuts | " | 7 | 8 | 0 |
| Ghee, per tin... | | 18 | 0 | 0 |